

Official Statistics Release

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Introduction

This official statistics release reports on statutory notifications of incidents affecting children, aged under 18 years. This is the first time that such data have been published. The data are experimental, because the statistics do not yet meet the rigorous quality standards of National Statistics.

These data only reflect the extent of Ofsted's current knowledge about all the details relating to the notifications that were received in the relevant period. For example, it may not reflect other, more up-to-date, information that has not been provided to Ofsted. It is important that users understand clearly the status of these data and their limitations.

Requirement for local authorities to notify Ofsted

Under Local Authority Circular LAC(2007)25, local authorities are required to provide statutory notifications of incidents affecting children to Ofsted.

Local authorities should notify Ofsted of serious incidents involving children which:

- are serious enough that they may lead to a Serious Case Review, including where a child has sustained a potentially life-threatening injury through abuse or neglect, serious sexual abuse, or sustained serious and permanent impairment of health or development through abuse or neglect; or
- involve a child death and will automatically lead to a Serious Case Review (when a child dies (including death by suicide) and abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the child's death); or
- should be brought to the attention of Ofsted and the Government because of concern about professional practice or implications for Government policy; or
- raise issues about a council's professional practice that may need to be considered further in the context of performance assessment; or
- have attracted or are likely to attract media attention.

Local authorities are also obliged to inform Ofsted of the death of a child looked after and of every case that becomes the subject of a serious case review. Ofsted passes the information from these serious incident notifications to the Department for Education.

Ofsted previously evaluated the quality of serious case reviews. This responsibility ceased in July 2012, during the time period covered by this statistical release.

Key findings

Notifications

From 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, Ofsted received 231 Serious Incident Notifications from 97 local authorities. The notifications related to 170 child deaths and 61 serious incidents.

The number of notifications received during the time period covered in this first statistical release does not necessarily equate to the number of incidents which have occurred within that time period. Some notifications relate to incidents which occurred before 1 April 2012, but about which Ofsted was not notified until after 1 April. A small number of notifications relate to allegations by adults concerning historical abuse which, allegedly, occurred when they were children.

Although each child death has its own, separate, notification, the number of notifications does not equate to the number of children involved in the incidents notified. Notifications involving incidents other than child death sometimes include information on family or non-related groups. The 61 notifications involving incidents other than death relate to 74 children. The underlying data for these cases, where it relates to the age range of the child, gives the age range of the child who is identified first in the notification.

Child deaths

At the time of a notification being made to Ofsted, the local authority may not have had full information about the cause of a child's death. Consequently, the authority may not have been able to provide complete information to Ofsted.

Where information has become available subsequent to the notification being made, such as by post-mortem or inquest findings, criminal convictions or further information from the local authority, Ofsted has used this information to inform the data in the table below. As stated above, the figures for child deaths do not all relate to deaths which occurred during the period.

Table 1: Cause of death for deaths notified to Ofsted between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013

| Category | Number | % |
|--|--------|-----|
| Natural causes | 41 | 24 |
| Killing/non-accidental death by a parent and/or partner/carer | 36 | 21 |
| Killing/non-accidental death by an unrelated person | 8 | 5 |
| Possible overlaying by parent/other | 13 | 8 |
| Dangerous behaviour by a child/young person (including suspected suicides) | 45 | 26 |
| Unknown or unexplained | 16 | 9 |
| Accident | 11 | 6 |
| Total | 170 | 100 |

Forty one children died from natural causes, of whom twenty seven were children with severe disabilities or life-limiting illnesses. Of these 27 children, 22 were looked after.

The term 'dangerous behaviour' has been used to signify actions by a child or young person which put them at risk of injury or death, including suspected suicides. This figure includes 25 young people who died by hanging.

Thirteen children, all aged under one year, died from possible overlaying by a parent/carer or overheating.

Forty four children and young people died from non-accidental death. These cases were assessed as non-accidental by using information from sources such as the local authority, and/or post-mortem or inquest findings. The alleged perpetrators in 36 of these incidents was/were the parent, parent's partner or the carer of the child.

There are some deaths that remain unexplained or where the cause of death is not known. This occurs where, for example, the results of a post-mortem may be inconclusive or where it has not been possible for the agencies investigating the death to fully ascertain the circumstances.

Serious incidents

From 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, 61 notifications of serious incidents, which were incidents not involving the death of a child, were received by Ofsted. These related to 74 children.

At the time of a notification being made to Ofsted, the local authority may not have had full information about the serious incident. Consequently, the authority may not have been able to provide complete information to Ofsted.

Where information has become available subsequent to the notification being made, such as criminal convictions or further information from the local authority, Ofsted has used this information to inform the data in the table below. The table categorises the incidents by numbers of notifications and not numbers of children.

Table 2: Serious incident, other than death of a child, notified to Ofsted between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013

| Category | Number | % |
|---|--------|-----|
| Non-accidental injury by a parent and/or partner/carers | 18 | 30 |
| Sexual abuse by parent and/or partner/carers | 6 | 10 |
| Sexual abuse by unrelated person | 10 | 16 |
| Other /not known/not categorisable | 9 | 15 |
| Non-accidental injury - not known | 6 | 10 |
| Non-accidental injury by unrelated person | 4 | 7 |
| Neglect | 4 | 7 |
| Accident/Dangerous behaviour | 4 | 7 |
| Total | 61 | 100 |

Serious case reviews

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in a local authority area has the responsibility for deciding whether a serious incident meets the criteria for the instigation of a serious case review (SCR).¹

In these data, in 93 of the 231 notifications, the relevant LSCB decided to instigate a serious case review. Sixty nine of these serious case reviews were in response to the death of a child or young person and twenty four were in response to a serious incident.

¹ Until 21 March 2013, the statutory guidance containing these criteria was *'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (DCSF 2010)* which stated that "the LSCB should undertake a serious case review when a child dies (including death by suspected suicide) **and** abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the death. An SCR should always be carried out when a child dies in custody, either in police custody, on remand or following sentencing, in a Young Offender Institution (YOI), a Secure Training Centre (STC) or secure children's home, or where the child was detained under the Mental Health Act 2005." (*para 8.9*)

"LSCBs should consider whether to conduct a SCR whenever a child has been seriously harmed in the following situations:

- a child sustains a potentially life-threatening injury or serious and permanent impairment of physical and/or mental health and development through abuse or neglect;

or

- a child has been seriously harmed as a result of being subjected to sexual abuse;

or

- a parent has been murdered and a domestic homicide review is being initiated

under the Domestic Violence Act 2004 or a child has been seriously harmed following a violent assault perpetrated by another child or an adult; and the case gives rise to concerns about the way in which local professionals and services worked together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes inter-agency and/or inter-disciplinary working." (*para 8.11*)

The criteria were similar in *'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013'* from 21 March 2013 onward.

Methodology

The data in the release are from serious incident notifications received by Ofsted between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013.

The number of notifications received during the time period covered in this first statistical release are not, necessarily, the number of incidents which have occurred during 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013.

Some notifications relate to incidents which occurred before 1 April 2012, but about which Ofsted was not notified until after 1 April. The notifications also include a small number relating to allegations by adults concerning historical abuse, which allegedly occurred when they were children.

The number of notifications do not equate to the number of children involved in those incidents. Each child death had its own, separate, notification. Those notifications involving incidents other than child death sometimes included family or non-related groups in one notification document. The 61 incidents other than child death relate to 74 children. The underlying data, where it relates to age band, relate to the child that is referenced first in the document sent to Ofsted.

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